

# Department of Human Services

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### Monday, August 28, 2006

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# Who killed boy is a mystery

## 9 people at home during tot's beating

**BY JACK KRESNAK**

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

*August 26, 2006*

Nine people -- three children under age 4, a 12-year-old girl, three teenagers and two adult women -- were present in a Detroit home when a young foster child was severely beaten and burned last week, according to court records from a hearing Friday.

But Detroit police still don't know who killed 2-year-old Isaac Lethbridge.

A juvenile court hearing Friday on the status of two adopted children of foster parent Charlise Rogers provided some new details about what happened in her home on Greenlawn the day Isaac died -- Aug. 16. But the hearing answered few questions about the tragedy that has left Isaac's birth family bereft and prompted the state to shut down a foster care agency.



Isaac Lethbridge died Aug. 16.

"What we have here is the death of a child, and nobody knows what happened to the child," Wayne County Family Court Chief Referee Kelly Ramsey said, adding that she recognized Rogers from another recent foster care case.

After the hearing on the state's petition to have Rogers' parental rights to two adopted children terminated, Rogers said she doesn't know what happened to Isaac other than he was put down for a nap and found unconscious 45 minutes later, when she called 911.

"All of us were there," Rogers said.

The foster mother's attorney, Marc Shreeman, said Rogers recently passed a privately arranged polygraph test that showed she is telling the truth when she says she doesn't know what happened to Isaac.



Nevertheless, Ramsey denied Shreeman's request to allow Rogers to visit the two adopted children, a 12-year-old and a 1-year-old girl. The children have already been removed from the home by the state. Ramsey also denied a request to let the two visit each other while the investigation into Isaac's death continues.

Besides those two, Rogers has one other adopted daughter, who is 18. Rogers had been caring for four foster children -- Isaac, his 4-year-old sister and two 16-year-old girls who are unrelated.

All of those children, plus an adult woman Rogers called a caretaker, were in the home when Isaac was fatally beaten, according to Rogers.

Isaac's sister and the two other foster children were removed from the home by the state Department of Human Services immediately after the boy's death and placed in other foster homes.

Ramsey decided to allow the state's petition, which asks the court to take jurisdiction over the two minor adopted girls, to move forward, and a hearing is scheduled for Thursday.

In the petition, a Child Protective Services investigator, Teresa Collins, wrote in graphic detail about Isaac's death: A doctor at Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit who tried to revive Isaac and declared the boy's death said he had second-degree burns to 80% of his chest and abdomen area, fresh bruises on his forehead and right ear and old bruises on his chin, left shoulder, left upper arm, left thigh, right ankle and buttocks.

An autopsy report showed he died of multiple blunt force injuries and burns, and that he had a broken clavicle.

Collins' petition said Isaac's sister showed similar injuries: bruises along her spine to her buttocks, as well as bruises on her thighs and her ankles.

Although Rogers said only she, her adopted children, her foster children and the caretaker were in the home that day, the petition said there are allegations -- she did not say by whom -- that other adults may have been living in Rogers' home.

Those include her 29-year-old son who has convictions for theft and domestic violence and a 33-year-old man with convictions for unarmed robbery and theft, as well as a history of domestic violence, the petition said.

Last Saturday, the DHS began interviewing foster parents and foster children assigned to the Lula Belle Stewart Center, a Detroit foster-adoptive agency that licensed Rogers' home.



On Wednesday, the DHS said it was closing down the center and temporarily assuming management of its cases.

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August 26, 2006

## Police question 9 in tot's death

Court says boy, 2, was burned, had broken bones and bruises; probe centers on foster parent, others.

**Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News**

**DETROIT** -- Isaac Lethbridge, the 2-year-old boy who died last week in a Detroit foster home, suffered a violent death, according to documents from Wayne County's Juvenile Court.

He had second degree burns on 80 percent of his chest, abdomen and head; a broken clavicle; a fresh bruise on his forehead and right ear; and bruises around his ankle. His body also bore signs of sexual abuse.

Detroit police are investigating the foster homeowner, Charlise Adams-Rogers, along with eight other people who were in the home at the time of Isaac's death Aug. 16. They include Adams-Rogers' 41-year-old son; two grandsons, ages 16 and 19; an adopted 18-year-old daughter; and two other adults.

The juvenile court on Friday authorized the removal of Adams-Rogers' two adopted children, said Wayne County Chief Judge Mary Beth Kelly. The children were removed earlier this week. The Michigan Department of Human Services also filed a petition to terminate Adams-Rogers' parental rights.

"We don't understand how someone could do that to someone so innocent," said Isaac's biological father, Matthew Lethbridge of Whitmore Lake. "Isaac was just such a happy, loving little boy. I am outraged, I am furious and I am disgusted."

Adams-Rogers, 59, could not be reached for comment. Court documents dating back to 1999 revealed complaints of abuse and neglect of Adams-Rogers' own children and her foster children.

Besides Adams-Rogers' two adopted children, Isaac was living in the home with his sister and two other foster children, all of whom were victims of neglect and physical, sexual and emotional abuse, court documents said.

Court documents show witnesses gave conflicting reports of Isaac's death.

Adams-Rogers told police she put Isaac down for a nap at 4 p.m. and when he was checked at 4:45 p.m., he was dead. Her 18-year-old daughter reported later that she found Isaac under a blanket. When she removed the blanket, she saw he was blue and called 911.

Emergency officials attempted to resuscitate Isaac when they arrived at 5:05 p.m. At 5:15 p.m., Adams-Rogers called the Lula Belle Stewart foster care agency to report that Isaac was being taken to Children's Hospital of Michigan. Adams-Rogers called back 45 minutes later to report he had died.

Adams-Rogers told hospital staff she found Isaac on the floor near his bunk bed. She said she did not know how he was burned or got the bruises, documents said.

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## **MAN ACCUSED OF HAVING SEX WITH BOY HE MET ONLINE SAYS HE HAS HIV**

**Correction** by Stan Donaldson, Free Press Staff Writer  
Detroit Free Press, August 26, 2006

A 37-year-old Detroit man accused of having sex with a 14-year-old boy he met on the Internet told authorities he is HIV-positive, the Wayne County Sheriff's Office said Friday.

Steven Foster was arrested Thursday after he was caught in an undercover sting by the sheriff's office - making him one of three men arrested since Wednesday by the Internet crimes unit accused of arranging to meet with underage children for sex, Sheriff Warren Evans said.

Foster is charged with illegal use of the Internet and child sexually abusive behavior. He also is expected to be arraigned Monday on a third-degree criminal sexual conduct charge involving the 14-year-old Inkster boy. He has no prior offenses, authorities said. He hadn't been assigned a lawyer as of Friday.

Evans said that Foster, who was arraigned Friday in Hamtramck on the illegal use of the Internet charge and the abusive behavior charge, told authorities he was HIV-positive.

"We are not confirming that he is, or saying he has it ... that is just what he told deputies," Evans said.

Authorities said Foster was arrested in Detroit after he agreed in an online chat to meet with an undercover officer who was posing as an underage boy. The other men arrested this week thought they were meeting with underage girls, officials said.

In the case of the Inkster boy, the sheriff's office received a call from his family saying the boy had met the man online and was lured into having sex. No other details were immediately available.

"We had a victim, and the family helped us," Evans said. "When a sexual predator is caught most people think it is their first time, but in most cases, it is a behavior that repeats itself."

Evans said Foster will receive medical testing during processing at the Wayne County Jail to see if his claims of having HIV are true, and, if they are, then additional charges could be filed by prosecutors. Roach said it was not known if the boy had the virus that leads to AIDS or not, Roach said.

Craig Covey, executive director of the Midwest AIDS Prevention Project in Ferndale, said his organization often talks to young people about the dangers of using the Internet to find partners and the need to protect themselves.

"We always talk to teens and all of our clients about being careful," he said.

Foster is being held in the Wayne County Jail on \$500,000 bond. If convicted of the illegal use of the Internet and child sexually abusive behavior charges, he could face 20 years in prison.

Evans said there could be additional charges - even the possibility of an attempted murder charge - if he is HIV-positive.



The other men who were charged Friday are Faod Makar, 33, of Warren and Matthew Sibal, 24, of Lansing. Both remain in the Wayne County Jail. Makar is being held on \$250,000 bond, and Sibal is being held on \$100,000 bond.

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August 26, 2006

**Laura Berman:**

## Pedophile shakes parents' trust



To the toddlers and small children at the Beverly Hills Club, he was "Mr. Don," the most popular swimming teacher at the club -- renowned for his near-magical ability to transform fearful kids into paddling water babies.

For nine years, Donald R. Salata built his reputation and the club's as *the* place in the Birmingham/Bloomfield area for little kids to learn to swim.

But Salata, 42, stopped teaching at the club last February, and earlier this month, a parent's outraged, widely circulated e-mail to other members triggered an explanatory e-mail from the athletic club's president, Steven Satovsky.

That's when members learned for the first time that Salata had a history of criminal sexual misconduct involving children. In fact, he had served a federal prison sentence for child abuse in Missouri after being caught taking nude photographs of a 4-year-old. He was also convicted of another count of distributing child pornography over the Internet.

At the time of his arrest in 1989, Mr. Don was a college student known in some circles as "Dirty Don," with a self-described fetish involving kids wearing diapers, according to court documents.

To the members at the upscale health club, who are largely drawn from the Birmingham/Bloomfield area, the realization that they'd entrusted their children to someone with a history of prurient, criminal interest in toddlers was a betrayal and a chilling reminder of their vulnerability as parents.

"It went beyond betrayal," says Karl Woodard, the Beverly Hills police chief, who has fielded dozens of calls from concerned parents in recent weeks. Woodard said Friday that he compares Salata's stature as a trusted teacher to a minister or priest or rabbi, so deeply was he revered by many of the members.

Salata's secret history unraveled last winter, when the Beverly Hills Police Department received an anonymous tip warning that Salata was a pedophile, even though he was not -- and had never been -- listed on the Michigan sex offender registry.

As a result of the police investigation, the athletic club was notified, and Salata was promptly fired. But until Salata's name appeared on the sex offender registry in June, parents didn't know what had happened to him. One of them posted a furious e-mail directed to other Beverly Hills Club swim moms on Aug. 10, after she had discovered Salata's history.

"He was referred to me as the one person who could turn a child's (sic) extreme fear of water around ... and he did exactly that," she wrote. "I often bragged about his 'gift with children' and what terrific rapport he had with my kids."

The mother described how shocked she was this spring when Salata had disappeared and, through a friend, was able to contact him for private lessons. She didn't hire him, a decision she credited to both his \$120 an hour fee and "divine intervention."

But her feelings -- and rage -- at the club were shared by many members, who were stunned by the club's failure to ferret out his record, the state's failure to log him onto the registry, and Salata's own audacity in continuing to work with young children, despite having served time. (Legally, Salata was not barred from working with children.)

Elyse Foltyn, whose four young children take swim lessons at the Beverly Hills Club, immediately met with the club manager when she learned of Salata's history. "You put your kids in these places, and you expect the personnel have been screened carefully. It's frustrating, very frustrating, to learn that these checks failed to produce a true record."

Beverly Hills Club officials argue they couldn't legally talk about the case until Salata was officially listed on the Michigan registry. "It was part of his personnel file until then, and confidential," says Shawn Sage, the club operations director. That doesn't explain why the club didn't notify members -- who could still have been trying to hire Salata privately -- until August.



Sage said that the athletic club's background check included questions about past convictions "and he falsified the answers. He did not answer truthfully." Sage said there had been no complaints about Salata here.

A 2002 "random" background check turned up nothing, he said, because Salata's offenses were not on the Missouri or Michigan registries. Salata, who now lists a Detroit address, did not return phone calls Friday.

In fact, a loophole in the law almost prevented the Beverly Hills police from getting Salata on the registry this June: Salata was out of prison and on probation in Michigan in October 1995 -- at the time the registry was established. If he'd been released earlier, he would not have to register, even now.

The moms who blithely drop off their children at registered, certified day care centers (as the Beverly Hills Club is) or health clubs or schools consider this episode a reality check -- and a reminder of how imperfect our background, back-up systems to protect our children really are.

"How can you be surprised that a health club doesn't do enough background checks when you see that, in the JonBenet Ramsey case (John Mark Karr), schools are hiring pedophiles?" says Foltyn, the Birmingham mother of four.

At the Beverly Hills Club these days, there's a concerted commitment to safety, and more ambitious national background checks. A recorded message that plays when a caller is on hold describes the club's "safety camp" for children, including lessons on "stranger danger."

But there's a problem with singling out strangers for suspicion: They can be less dangerous than the person you only think you know.

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## Courts need to do better

I am appalled by the mild punishment given for child abuse as many children die at the hands of these very violent offenders, and in my opinion these people shouldn't see the light of day.

Our judicial system is far too lenient and forgiving when it comes to these as well as sex offenders. Trespassing can carry a larger fine and or jail sentence. I guess some things still need to change with our laws and court system as we already have too many laws that they can't enforce, but you should be able to protect our children as they are our future.



# Toby research project to target child sex abuse

ANDREW SCOTT  
Pocono Record Writer

August 28, 2006

CARBONDALE — For Georgia Archer of Stroud Township, telling an interviewer the things she says her now-ex-husband did to three of her four children was an intense experience, but one she feels was well worth it.

"It's for a cause that hopefully in the future can help other parents and their children avoid having to go through what I and my children have gone through," said Archer, a member of a new children's rights advocacy group in the Poconos and one of the first two northeast Pennsylvania parents involved in a new research project.

The project involves interviewing parents usually mothers whose children have been sexually abused by their spouses or partners usually the children's fathers or the mothers' boyfriends. This effort is being led by forensic examiner Dr. Andrea Taroli of the Pegasus Child Advocacy Center in Carbondale, in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The center, which will open its new Tobyhanna office Sept. 15, interviews and examines child victims of alleged sexual abuse. Police can charge the suspect if physical signs of such abuse are found on the child's body or if the child's statements about the alleged abuse are consistent.

"The project's intent is to look for patterns in the behavior of men who sexually abuse children," Taroli said. "Since we don't have access to these men to interview them, the next best thing is to interview the children's mothers who have lived with these men. Any patterns we find might help guide police in interrogating suspects more effectively for purposes of corroborating evidence.

"We're also looking for patterns in how these women ended up in relationships with these men and what kind of woman tends to attract such a man," Taroli said, noting that women who were sexually abused themselves as children are likely to have children who will suffer the same fate. "Maybe we can help educate the public on how women can avoid such relationships, as well as on signs mothers should look for that indicate their children are being abused."

Yet another way this information can help is in the process that determines whether a suspected abuser should be allowed bail if charged by police or whether a convicted abuser is ready to be placed on probation or parole.

"So far, we've interviewed two mothers and hope to interview 23 more," Taroli said.



"That likely will take a year and it will probably be two years before we're finally ready to publish our findings.

"We have a contact list of mothers who've brought their children to us in the past when the fathers or boyfriends were suspected of abuse, but not everyone on that list wants to be part of the project, even though we guarantee anonymity," she said. "So, we're also looking for mothers who haven't come to us."

The best candidates for interviews are mothers whose children were under 14 when the abuse was reported, with the perpetrators being over 18. Anyone interested in taking part can contact the Pegasus Child Advocacy Center at 570 282-6881.





## The Star-Ledger

### Child abuse calls roll in to state hotline

#### Awareness increases

Monday, August 28, 2006

**BY SUSAN K. LIVIO**  
Star-Ledger Staff

Two years after the state created a central hotline to make reporting child abuse easier, the number of calls that lead to investigations or intervention by case workers has increased dramatically.

State officials and child welfare experts say that does not signal a rising tide of violence or neglect toward children in New Jersey. What has grown, they say, is public awareness of the need to report suspected abuse -- and the efficiency of the hotline in turning calls into action.

In the first six months of this year, 37,172 tips to the statewide toll-free number were referred to the Division of Youth and Family Services for follow-up. That was up by 33 percent from the same period last year.

The second half of 2005 showed a similar increase from the previous year. While the numbers fluctuate from month to month, the trend has been steadily upward.

"Centralizing the registry has achieved what we wanted to do -- to make it easier and more accessible for the public to call in allegations of abuse and neglect," said Diane Milan, deputy director of DYFS' central operations. "When it became no longer (a question of) what number do I call, and became one number and one location, people were likely to make those calls."

Public awareness of child abuse, and of DYFS mistakes, escalated in 2003 when the beaten body of 7-year-old Faheem Williams was found in Newark, and four brothers were found starving in a licensed foster home in Collingswood.

This year, widespread news coverage of a New York tragedy -- the Jan. 11 beating death of 7-year-old Nixzmary Brown in Brooklyn -- contributed to the increase of tips to the New Jersey hotline and referrals to DYFS, child welfare experts say.

New Jersey's very public struggle to rehabilitate its flawed child welfare system also has kept the issue fresh, said Janet Rosenzweig, executive director of the nonprofit Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey. Since 2004, the state has dedicated \$432 million to expand and retool DYFS to comply with a lawsuit settlement reached with the advocacy group Children's Rights Inc.

"You can't live in New Jersey and not know there is a lawsuit," Rosenzweig said. "We've had the horrible cases. There's been a lot of attention on the issue."

In its first year, the hotline was the target of criticism that it appeared to be screening out tips that merited investigation, and that the staff was poorly managed and trained. A court-appointed panel of child welfare experts monitoring DYFS reform demanded the state fix it.

Since June 2005, all calls have been recorded and used by supervisors to rate proficiency in areas such as gathering facts, identifying risk factors and maintaining professionalism -- no slang, no sarcasm, no laughter. The original full-time crew of about 40 has grown to 170 full-time and part-time workers.



"We started out with a smaller group and quickly knew we needed more," said Lisa Sitze, a hotline supervisor who was among the first screeners when the operation began.

The staff has been retrained many times as policies have changed and new technology has been added. It's running more smoothly, but the work remains "very intense," said Sitze, a former caseworker. "You have to have your mind in several different places at once, handling multiple job functions."

Teachers, police officers, doctors and nurses -- professionals who are trained to identify abuse -- are the most consistent hotline users, according to data from the state Department of Children and Families, which includes DYFS. In March -- which saw 6,872 referrals, the highest monthly total so far -- nearly one-third of the tips came from school personnel, followed by medical professionals and police, who each supplied 10 percent.

Educators are offered annual refresher workshops and seminars on how to spot a child in trouble and report it properly, said Steve Wollmer, spokesman for the New Jersey Education Association teachers union. "I think teachers are very clear on their obligation."

Hospital nurses are required by the state Health Department to take annual courses in child abuse, and emergency room nurses must undergo even more specialized training in this area, said Mary Kamienski of the Emergency Nursing Association of New Jersey.

Steven Kairys, chief of pediatrics at Jersey Shore University Medical Center in Neptune and chairman of research and education for the New Jersey chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, said he's traveled to about 50 pediatricians' offices over the past three years, accompanied by a DYFS worker, to instruct doctors, nurses and clerks on how to identify and report abuse.

"In the world of child abuse, it's so important when dealing with such a socially sensitive topic you trust the system and know someone you can talk to," Kairys said.

Arburta Jones, director of DYFS operations, believes the number of calls referred is rising because the workers are getting better at recognizing which tips are credible.

"In July 2004, people who were brought in here to screen ... were caseworkers who had to develop the skills," Jones said. "They are asking better follow-up questions now."

Not everyone sees the increase as a good sign. Richard Wexler, executive director of the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, a think tank critical of foster care, said the rise in cases may mean there is "a failure to properly screen them."

"Politicians rush to tell people to report anything and everything, no matter how absurd, and let DYFS sort it out," Wexler said. "That inundates investigators, making them, in fact, unable to sort anything out -- so they cause enormous harm to some families with needless investigations and removals even as they miss even more children in real danger."

Rosenzweig of Prevent Child Abuse said because there is no organized system to hook up troubled families with nonprofit agencies and other support services, "People have become more reliant on the formal system of child protection." And sometimes, she said, they are too quick to call the authorities.

"In the '60s, a hungry family might have gotten a casserole," she said. "If a child is hungry because mom is out of money, you offer mom and the kids food, you don't call DYFS and say she is neglecting her kids."

*The state child abuse hotline telephone number is 877-NJ ABUSE (652-2873).*

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## Safety check pays dividends



**David and Beth Manninen hold 6-month-old Dylan. Dylan made it through the family's roll-over accident without a scratch because he was seated in a secure safety seat. (Daily Press photo by Alicia Holmes)**

By Alicia Holmes - [aholmes@dailypress.net](mailto:aholmes@dailypress.net)

ESCANABA — Six-month-old Dylan Manninen is one lucky boy. He survived a roll-over van accident without a scratch thanks to a vehicle safety seat his parents received the day of the accident.

Dylan's parents, Beth and David Manninen, acquired the safety seat Aug. 12 at a car-seat safety check at Classic Auto Collision in Escanaba. That's when the Manninens learned Dylan's car seat wasn't safe. He needed a new one, and the new seat needed to be placed in a different spot in their van, said Beth.

"I thought it was good," Beth said. "But I thought, 'Better safe than sorry.' I wanted to be sure, so I attended the safety check."

Beth had kept Dylan's safety seat behind the driver's seat, but she learned it would be safer in the middle of the back seat, she said. The Manninens were given a safe seat and shown how to properly install it. "I'm so glad we did that," said Beth.

Later that night, when Beth was turning her van on County Road 426, she slid off the road a little and onto the gravel shoulder. "I tried to correct myself. I hit the brakes and over-corrected and I flipped the van on its side," said Beth. "The van's a wreck ... and Dylan was just perfect."

The Manninens' old seat likely wouldn't have held Dylan in place, said Beth. "I'm so thankful. If we hadn't had it properly installed, if we'd had a bad car seat, something could've happened to Dylan," she said.

"It is our belief that, because of the seriousness of the crash, if Dylan had been in his old seat, he would've been ejected," said Diane Curry, child passenger safety technician instructor and health educator in the Marquette County Health Department. "That seat really protected him."

The Manninens' old seat had been used by other families, said Curry. "Someone had altered the harness, and it could no longer secure a child safely... Beth didn't know because she didn't have



the instructions," she said. "A very important piece was missing."

Now, Beth wants to help other kids stay safe, she said. "If I save one little kid, it's all worth it," she said. She told her story at a presentation at Classic Auto Collision this morning.

During safety checks, parents bring in vehicles, children and car seats, said Beth. "They go over everything and make sure it's in proper working order," she said. "They show you exactly where the seat should be ... then you install it to practice doing it the right way."

Upcoming safety-seat checks are scheduled for Sept. 23 from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. at the Manistique Middle/High School, Sept. 9 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. at State Farm in Marquette, and Sept. 16 from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. at the Munising State Police Post, said Curry. Seats also can be checked in Escanaba at the Delta County Sheriff's Department, Department of Human Services and the Marquette Delta Schoolcraft Community Action Agency Early Childhood Program, she said.

Even parents with new seats should consider attending a safety check, said Curry. "Sometimes instructions are really hard to understand... A lot of people learn better when they're shown," she said.

Many parents don't realize their children are at risk, Beth noted. Car seats must be secure within vehicle, and children must be secure within a seat, said Curry. "If both aren't right, there is potential for injury," she said.

Officials check 14 items during safety checks, said Curry. The Manninens had seven that needed correcting, she said. More than 90 percent of seats evaluated during checks have something wrong with them, said Curry.

Some factors are more critical than others, Curry noted. "Our job is to educate people about the safest way to transport children ... to teach them to do things perfectly," she said. For instance, officials tell parents a car seat shouldn't move more than an inch from side to side, she said.

Many parents keep harnesses too loose because they believe kids will be uncomfortable if harnesses are snug, said Curry. "In a roll-over, you want your child snug," she said.

Some parents are resistant to officials' suggestions, but the Manninens were very receptive, said Curry. "They did everything we recommended," she said. Because of this, the Office of Highway Safety Planning today presented an "I Made the Connection" award to the Manninens. They also received a new car seat. Classic Auto Collision received an award honoring the business for hosting the safety check.

Child seat safety questions can be directed to Curry at (906) 315-2612. Those interested in hosting a safety check also can contact Curry.

Upper Peninsula-wide safety checks are funded through a \$100,000 Office of Highway Safety Planning grant received by the Marquette County Sheriff's Department, said Curry.

Also participating in today's presentation were Marquette Delta Schoolcraft CAA Early Childhood Program, Upper Peninsula Child Passenger Safety Coalition and the Delta County Sheriff's Department.

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# Help all teens excel

Detroit Free Press Letters

*August 27, 2006*

How wonderful that the Triangle Foundation created the camp for gay teens ("Camp is haven for gay teens," Aug. 18). There should be more places like this. All teens should feel comfortable and accepted for who they are. All teens should feel safe. All should be encouraged to be the best that they can be. All should be celebrated for their youth, vitality, creativity, humor, willingness to change the world, bravery, etc.

Sexual orientation doesn't matter; we're all more alike than we are different. That's not just true about teens, it's true about all of us. It's about time the rest of this world learned that.



Lansing State Journal Letters

August 28, 2006

## **Rally on custody**

Oh how I agree with the Aug. 20 Viewpoint regarding joint custody and House Bill 5267 written by Cory Mackwood. The current child custody laws were wrong when they were written in the 1970s, and are out of date now.

It's unfortunate that any parent is willing to use children as a means to punish the other parent. But it is done every day, and the current antiquated system helps to do just that.

I encourage all who believe that "The Best Parent is Both Parents," to join us on the Capitol lawn Sept. 27 at noon, where we intend on passing that message to Michigan's lawmakers.

Steven McClean

Lansing



# New group advocates for children's rights

ANDREW SCOTT  
Pocono Record Writer

August 28, 2006

STROUDSBURG — Kim Martin of Allentown has been fighting for two years in Lehigh County Court to gain sole custody of her children, now 16 and 11, who she says were emotionally and sexually abused by their father although he has never been charged.

"This is not where I want to be or what I want to be doing," said Martin, a founding member of a new concerned citizens' group called the Safe Child Custody Network. "I want to move on after the pain my children and I have suffered, but I can't."

Organized by Georgia Archer of Stroud Township, another parent in a similar situation, the Safe Child Custody Network wants the court system to ensure what's best for the child outweighs the interests of the parents fighting for custody.

"The child should be placed in the safest, healthiest environment available with the person most fit to care for that child, be it the mother, the father or someone else," Archer said.

The new group has eight members from various walks of life in Monroe and neighboring counties and includes men and women both with and without children. They have planned a rally for Saturday starting at 1 p.m. at the Monroe County Courthouse in downtown Stroudsburg.

"This is not an attack on judges or anyone else," Archer said. "This is about being proactive in raising public awareness of an issue that gets too little attention. We just want to make sure the courts aren't making decisions detrimental to children's best interests simply because individual judges may traditionally side with mothers or fathers."

The group's goals coincide with those of Heads Held High, an organization already existing in Monroe County.

"We demand accountability from judges, lawyers, child welfare agencies and everyone else in the system whose decisions and actions affect children's lives," said Heads Held High member Dave Maresca, whose organization is pursuing an ongoing investigation into Monroe County Children And Youth Services for allegedly placing children in unsafe, unhealthy environments.

"Ultimately, we want to see families work out their problems and reunite, but children's welfare should come first," said Maresca, who recently met with Safe Child Custody



Network members to learn more about their group and offer any support on behalf of Heads Held High.

Archer said her group likely will plan more public events in the future.

"I don't know anyone who really cares about their children who would give up if in the same situation myself and others face," she said. "You have to keep fighting. It's just sad that the truly fit parents have to fight so hard. Maybe with more public awareness, that can change.





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Published August 27, 2006

## More physicians say no to Medicaid

Mich. doctors contend reimbursements too low

By Christine Rook  
Lansing State Journal

If you are a Medicaid patient in Michigan, or you have a loved one who is, the news is grim. A growing percentage of doctors don't take Medicaid.

Physicians blame Medicaid, the state-run health insurance program for low-income patients, which they say doesn't cover their costs.

More than 1.4 million people rely on Medicaid in Michigan.

In 1999, more than 88 percent of practicing doctors surveyed by the Michigan State Medical Society reported accepting Medicaid.

In 2005, just 65 percent did. About 1,000 doctors were surveyed for the studies, which state health officials say are reliable.

National data out this month also shows a downward trend, but not as drastic as what Michigan doctors report.

In 1996-97, for example, more than 87 percent of doctors surveyed nationally accepted Medicaid, according to the nonpartisan Center for Studying Health System Change in Washington, D.C. By 2004-05, the number dipped to only 85 percent.

What does all this mean for the state?

Michigan's needy must hunt harder for health care. If they can't find it, they often go to hospitals where it costs the public more.

### Fundraiser

- A golf fundraiser is set for Sept. 29 to benefit the Cristo Rey Community Center health clinic. The outing will be held at The Majestic at Lake Walden in Hartland, northeast of Howell. The cost is \$100 per person; 45 percent of the proceeds go to the clinic. The goal is to raise \$25,000. At least \$4,800 has been pledged.

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"Sometimes I wind up at the emergency room," said Medicaid patient Antonio Heredia, 57, of Lansing.

Heredia suffers from back pain and had stopped by the Cristo Rey Health Center on a recent morning, because the clinic accepts Medicaid.

It is little consolation that since 2003 state records show there has been some relief - there are 76 more doctors in Michigan accepting Medicaid. However, during that same period of time, the ranks of Medicaid patients have swelled by 200,000.

"I tried a whole bunch of doctors," Heredia said. "Some of the doctors aren't taking new Medicaid patients. Some don't take Medicaid (at all). They tell you right off the bat."

### **The money factor**

Pay rates explain it all, according to doctors.

Private insurance, such as the PPO (preferred provider organization) through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, pays physicians \$62.37 for a relatively simple doctor's office visit. Medicaid pays \$29.93. The PPO pays \$455.43 for a diagnostic colonoscopy. Medicaid pays \$218.53.

Michigan sets those Medicaid rates, which are just below the national average, according to the nonprofit Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation in Washington, D.C. In fact the foundation notes that the federally funded Medicare program, which generally covers elder care, pays even more than Michigan's Medicaid - about 61 percent more on average.

"Medicine is a calling, but it also is a business," said Dr. Paul Farr, a gastroenterologist from Grand Rapids and president of the state Michigan State Medical Society, which lobbies on behalf of doctors but also works with state health officials to conduct research.

Many doctors' offices strictly limit the number of Medicaid patients they'll accept.

For example, only 12 percent of the clients at Michigan State University's clinical center are Medicaid patients, said Dr. David Walsworth, who works there. The practice can't handle more, and it's a dilemma. "We have a duty to care for Medicaid patients," he said.

Caring too much, though, costs big.

The Cristo Rey clinic, where Heredia goes for care, runs about \$100,000 in the red annually because 70 percent of its patients rely on Medicaid or Medicare, according to its director.

"We're hurting moneywise," said Cristo Rey Executive Director John Roy Castillo.

In 2005, Castillo tried to save money by replacing a doctor position with two part-time nurse practitioners. In September, he's hosting a golf fundraiser.

### **The search for care**

A separate survey in 2005 conducted by the state Department of Community Health and Michigan State Medical Society shows new Medicaid patients have an even tougher time finding care than those already in the system.



In that study, 64 percent of doctors accepted Medicaid patients. Only 54 percent accepted new Medicaid clients.

This is not good news for Margorie Vandergriff, 37, of Holt. She must find a pediatrician for her newborn boy, Harvey Montgomery, who relies on Medicaid.

"I'm not real confident," she said. "Finding one you trust and like - that's the thing."

The situation could get worse. There is talk of lowering Medicare reimbursements about 5 percent, and doctors fear other rates, such as those for Medicaid, will shrink as a result.

U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, is drafting legislation to boost Medicare reimbursements 2.7 percent in 2007 and about the same amount the following year. There's no telling, though, whether such legislation would pass.

"We're actually seeing the total cost of medical care go up when we cut reimbursements rates," Stabenow said. Medicare patients "go to the ER."

Vandergriff, who relied on Medicaid during her pregnancy, called six doctors before finding one to treat her. "I got lucky," she said.

Contact Christine Rook at 377-1261 or [clrook@lsj.com](mailto:clrook@lsj.com).

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August 27, 2006

## Michigan should adopt estate recovery program

State ignores federal law on recouping Medicaid payments

### The Detroit News

Medicaid was never intended to be a benefit for the middle class, and yet many middle-income seniors are having their nursing home stays paid for by the health care program for the poor.

They can do it because Michigan is the only state in the nation that hasn't complied with the federal law requiring Medicaid estate recovery programs.

The federal statute requires states to recover at least some of the cost of providing nursing home care and other assistance when the Medicaid recipient dies.

In Michigan, the Medicaid bill is \$11 billion, with \$4 billion coming from state coffers and the rest from the federal government.

While the program is intended for low-income residents, Medicaid doesn't factor in the full value of homes and certain other assets when determining eligibility.

Seniors who transfer their cash assets to children or other relatives in advance of a nursing home stay can get their care paid for by Medicaid, and still leave a substantial estate once their home is sold.

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy in Midland estimates that Michigan could recoup \$85 million a year by complying with the federal estate recovery law.

While that's a small fraction of the \$1.7 billion Medicaid nursing home tab, it is not an insignificant amount of money, and the state is negligent in leaving it on the table.

It may sound harsh to ask the state to harangue families for the proceeds of a deceased loved ones' home sale. But the taxpayers should not be stuck with a bill that families could pay themselves.

Michigan has ignored the federal law for 10 years, forfeiting hundreds of millions of dollars that could have been used to fix roads or improve schools.

Medicaid costs are exploding for the state. It is irresponsible for Michigan to avoid taking steps that are certain to save money for the program.

Bills enacting estate recovery programs have been introduced in both the House and Senate, but haven't made it out of committee. Lawmakers seem to have no stomach for offending seniors.

But violating a federal law that could save taxpayers money is not good government.

Along with estate recovery, Michigan should also follow new federal rules that prevent a Medicaid applicant from hiding assets.

The rules cap the value at which an applicant's home and other assets can be considered exempt, require that a Medicaid applicant's divestments of assets be made at least five years before eligibility and make the federal government a beneficiary of a recipient's annuities.

The rules were put in place in 2005 by a Congress concerned about the skyrocketing cost of the Medicaid program.

Michigan lawmakers should be equally concerned with controlling costs.

The state cannot afford to pay the health care bills of those who are capable of paying themselves.

Michigan should move quickly to comply with the federal estate recovery laws.

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## **HEALTH CARE: CREATED UNEQUAL**

**From birth to old age, poor, uninsured minority people have an unequal chance to live a long, healthy life.**

By Patricia Anstett  
Free Press Medical Writer  
Detroit Free Press, August 27, 2006

More of their babies die in their first year. They have much higher rates of AIDS, high blood pressure, diabetes and other chronic diseases. Their cancers often are found later, when treatment is costlier and less successful. Late-in-life diseases, such as Alzheimer's, may get overlooked.

Obstacles to good health care may increase. Experts predict that growing numbers of people, young and old, will postpone appointments and tests because they can't afford higher copays; don't work at companies that offer insurance or have coverage that won't get them the help they need.

While lack of insurance increases a person's chance of not getting the best care, there are other obstacles: distrust of the medical establishment. Transportation and language barriers. America's complicated health care system.

Some solutions may come from Michigan, particularly metro Detroit, which has emerged as a leading center in a growing new field called population health, a broad area of study that examines why some groups face greater obstacles to health, focuses on reasons for disparities and designs new approaches to improve health for those at risk.

### **Local attempts at solutions**

At the University of Michigan, health disparities researcher James Jackson, PhD, directs an \$8-million, federally funded research study of African-American health, the largest ever conducted. It will survey more than 4,000 black Americans about physical, mental and economic barriers to mental health care. At Wayne State University, separate federally funded projects are using \$11 million in grants to intervene earlier in the study and management of African-American health issues. And in Lansing, \$4 million from two private foundations transformed the Ingham County Health Department from an aging bureaucracy into a model organization to better meet the needs of underserved people. Research results aren't expected for at least a few more years. And even where programs to help are under way, as in Ingham County, proving that they have resulted in better health may take years.

"We're in crisis," said Jackson, who directs the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. "Over 40% of the adult American population doesn't have any health insurance ... Those numbers rise with ethnic and racial minority groups. People are putting off preventative care because they can't afford it."

Leona Janecke, 27, of Lansing, sought help in May for a lump in her neck, but her limited insurance through the Ingham County Health Department's HMO, the Ingham Health Plan, caused problems.

Staff at Care Free Medical in Lansing tended to her and gave her antibiotics, but they thought it was important she see a specialist. They couldn't find an ear-nose-and-throat doctor in three counties who was accepting patients with Janecke's insurance.

By early June, what was eventually diagnosed as an infection in Janecke's salivary gland had become a leaky, purplish, grapefruit-sized lump.



Dr. Barry Saltman, who founded Care Free Medical to serve the uninsured after he retired from private practice, coaxed a specialist at the Ingham Regional Medical Center in Lansing to operate on Janecke on a weekend the physician was on duty in the hospital's emergency department.

Janecke's medical bills now total \$9,503.30.

Most likely, her bills will be written off by the hospital and paid for by taxpayers through government programs.

"People need to realize that the middle class is evaporating in America and we all could be in the same position pretty soon," said Jeannie Quinn, a patient care advocate at the clinic.

### **Reaching the Asian community**

Americans are foregoing mammograms, immunizations and childhood vision and hearing tests because they can't afford to pay even part of a doctor's visit, statistics show. Even when they can afford it, they may not trust the system.

Some programs are attempting to help by bringing health services to communities that need them the most.

Tsu-Yin (Stephanie) Wu, an Eastern Michigan University nurse, is trying to educate Asian Indian women about breast cancer prevention.

She found that many Asian women don't understand the importance of mammography and self-exams. They also fear cancer, have privacy issues about exposing their breasts and often lack insurance.

"Pink ribbons mean nothing to these people," said Wu, who held several breast cancer prevention programs this spring at the Hindu Temple of Canton.

U-M nurses do similar work at the temple and other community sites serving the diverse Asian Indian community in metro Detroit.

Some studies suggest that breast cancer occurs six times more often in women of Asian descent in the United States than in their native countries and that those women who get breast cancer are diagnosed later than whites, Wu said.

Help comes from the Michigan Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, which runs a free clinic each Wednesday in Oak Park.

"We can do all of this in our hospital, but if you go to the community, where it's convenient, you get a better turnout and comfort level in the community," said Tom Kochis, division president of Oakwood Annapolis, which provided 10 staffers and paid for several thousand dollars for blood tests at the spring event in Canton.

### **Race and hypertension**

Prevention of heart disease before it becomes costlier health problems is the focus of a one-year study at Detroit Receiving Hospital.



The project expects to screen 254 African Americans. Patients must be 35 or older and diagnosed with poorly managed high blood pressure when they are under treatment at Receiving's emergency department.

Besides improving and prolonging life, earlier treatment of high blood pressure could bring big potential savings for the economy, said Dr. Phillip Levy, who directs the study.

Drugs to treat high blood pressure cost as little as \$150 a year, compared to \$10,000-\$15,000 a year to treat heart failure and \$66,000 for dialysis for kidney-failure patients, Levy said.

For reasons not entirely clear, blood pressure "begins earlier in the black population in the United States and is more severe," said Dr. John Flack, a high blood pressure specialist at the Wayne State University School of Medicine and director of the school's Center for Urban and African American Health.

Black patients also may not be treated as aggressively, Flack said studies show. Levy found discrepancies between Detroit Medical Center hospitals.

Patients at Receiving, for example, which serves a predominately black population, were less likely to get certain blood pressure medicines than patients at the health system's Huron Valley Sinai Hospital in Commerce Twp., which serves a largely white clientele, according to statistics collected between 1999 and 2004.

But race can't always be blamed, as Harold Rhim's story suggests.

Rhim, 59, of Southfield is African American. He has had high blood pressure for two years. He has health insurance to pay for his medicines and doctor visits. He is lean and healthy looking.

Unbeknownst to his wife, Rhim stopped taking his medicine earlier this year because he didn't like the new doctor he was assigned to see when his health coverage changed, he said.

When his prescription for blood pressure medicine ran out in the winter he didn't bother to call for a refill. His wife was very upset when she got the call to meet her husband at a hospital and found out he hadn't been taking his medicine. He'd been taken to the hospital as a precaution after slipping on a wet floor at work.

"Here's a person I want to be with forever and he's not doing what he needs to do to be with me for forever," said Zondra Rhim.

Through Levy's study, Harold Rhim received free tests to pin down the extent of his blood pressure problem, including an ultrasound test of the heart, and an appointment with a cardiologist to recommend the best drugs and hypertension strategies.

By June, Rhim's blood pressure was at normal levels.

"If you take good care of yourself, you'll live as long as anybody else," Dr. Peter Vaitkevicius, a cardiologist, told him.

### **The insurance bill**

Two experts at the Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonprofit research group, argue that closing the health care gap may not be as expensive as everyone thinks. It might add as little as \$7 million to the \$41 million the nation already pays to reimburse hospitals for uninsured care, according to researchers Jack Hadley



and John Holahan. Extending full health coverage to the nation's uninsured would cost \$48 million, they estimate.

Currently, private insurance, Medicare and Medicaid in the United States cost \$735.6 billion a year, they say.

Opponents to extending some basic insurance to all Americans say the nation first should fix its broken, costly health care system, which relies too heavily on expensive hospital-based care. They estimate millions could be saved by shifting care to more cost-efficient, outpatient settings and primary care doctors.

Others see the problem as one for state and local governments, not federal agencies. They are looking at Massachusetts, where a new law requires all businesses to provide employee health insurance or pay \$295 a month for each employee without it by July 1, 2007.

Other solutions include training more minority practitioners; adding translators and advocates to help people understand complicated health systems; and hiring more community people to build rapport and promote awareness of good health practices.

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## Fed wants Medicare overpayments back

Monday, August 28, 2006

**BARRIE BARBER**

**THE SAGINAW NEWS and THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

The federal government sent Carl F. Herzberg a \$210 reimbursement for the monthly payments he made for Medicare prescription drug coverage.

Now, the feds say they made a mistake and want the money back.

The 84-year-old Thomas Township resident doesn't know what to do next, even though he and his wife, Dorothy, 81, have called Social Security and their bank. They received the refund via direct deposit.

"No one knows what's going on," he said. "It's very confusing. What it kind of looks like is somebody made a big mistake there."

The couple apparently is among 230,000 Medicare recipients who erroneously received refunds totaling \$50 million on monthly premiums for prescription drug coverage.

### Coverage will continue

Those who received direct deposits should set the extra money aside and not use it for other purposes. Recipients must return the payment, officials said.

Recipients should receive a letter with instructions on how to return the money this week, said Medicare spokesman Jeff Nelligan.

"We're going to soon be in contact with beneficiaries again, and we will make the process the least burdensome and least disruptive to beneficiaries as we can," he said. "Stay tuned."

Those who received reimbursements should know their prescription drug coverage will continue, officials said.

"There's no disruption at all," said Mark McClellan, head of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Medicare officials say they caught the glitch just after sending out the checks. They sent a letter Tuesday letting people know about the error. The average overpayment comes to about \$215.

### Banks befuddled

The Herzbergs aren't the only ones confused by the payments. A survey of several Saginaw County banks found they have not had to deal with people attempting to cash the checks, although they say the government hasn't contacted them either.

"We have not seen any of it, nor have we received any instruction from any government agency as to what we're to do," said James M. Van Tiflin, northern regional president for Citizens Banking Corp.

Van Tiflin said at this point, Citizens would consider a check a valid document.



Banks should honor the checks if people attempt to cash them, Nelligan said, although he noted that 90 percent of the payments were directly deposited.

"We would cash the check assuming proper identification, because I'm not sure we would know what the check is for," Van Tiflin said. "I've never had an experience like this before with a government check."

Community State Bank President James F. Delemeester had unanswered questions of his own at his St. Charles-based chain.

"If we cashed the check for the person, is the Treasury going to send the check back to us and say the check wasn't valid?" he asked. "I guess we'll have to wait and see what we're going to do."

First State Bank, LaSalle Bank, National City Bank and a Saginaw-area branch of Chemical Bank reported no checks surfacing either. v

Anyone with questions should call (800) MEDICARE. v

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Detroit Free Press Letters

August 27, 2006

## **Avoidable deaths**

Mentally ill inmates aren't the only vulnerable populations who suffer and die when temperatures soar ("Mentally ill inmate dies in isolation," Aug. 20). A telephone survey of 348 Michigan nursing homes revealed that about half do not have air conditioning in all resident rooms. The attorney general is now prosecuting a Detroit nursing home for one death and abuse of other residents whose body temperatures reached 107 degrees in a 2001 heat wave.

We know summers bring heat waves, that many nursing home residents are especially susceptible to heat, and we know simple ways to prevent death and suffering from extreme temperatures. When will the state and the nursing home industry address this tragic neglect of residents?

Alison Hirschel

Michigan Campaign for Quality Care



## County earns homeless grant

By ERICA KOLASKI

Tribune Staff Writer

CHEBOYGAN - Cheboygan County has received a \$10,000 grant to help end homelessness in the county.

The grant came from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority and will be used to develop a 10-year plan, said Pamela Lloyd-Gorski, spokeswoman for Northeast Michigan Affordable Housing, who will be responsible for writing the plan.

She said that local service providers including the Department of Human Services, North Country Community Mental Health, the Human Services Coordinating Body and the Cheboygan County Housing and Homeless Coalition are working on the project.

Alexis Kaczynski, director of North Country Community Mental Health, said that there are currently no clients who are living on the street in Cheboygan County, but many are close to losing their homes.

“The homeless situation is different here in Northern Michigan” said Aleta Seifert of the Housing and Homeless Coalition. “The majority of homeless people here aren't living on the streets, they are living with friends or relatives, or in the woods or at local campgrounds,” she said.

The 10-year plan for Cheboygan County will address the specific needs of the homeless population in the county, said Lloyd-Gorski, adding that affordable housing is a key goal.

“By developing this plan, Cheboygan County will be in the position to apply for funding from the state and to advocate for services needed for our area,” she said.

She said that no accurate count of the homeless population here has been made because of the unique characteristics of the area. The final plan for Cheboygan County is set to be finalized by Oct. 15.



# **Robinson Head Start gets new home**

Grand Haven Tribune

Child Development Services of Ottawa County (CDS) is closing its Robinson Elementary Head Start classroom. Children from the Grand Haven area will continue to be served at United Methodist Church of the Dunes Head Start, 717 Sheldon Road.

Children who attended Robinson Head Start and lived in the West Ottawa School District will now be housed at the new Macatawa Head Start, 665 136th Ave., in Holland. A new preschool and child care site that CDS will be opening in the Careerline Tec building on Port Sheldon Road will serve families in the West Olive area.

The move will allow children to attend preschool in their own district, making it easier for them to receive support services such as speech therapy. "This move will ... (also) help us ensure full enrollment," said Chris Piper, executive director.

"We are pleased that we can offer several different options to parents in the Grand Haven and Robinson area," Piper said.

CDS was leasing the Robinson Head Start classroom from Grand Haven Public Schools.

Child Development Services is a non-profit agency founded in 1966 that provides childcare and Head Start services to over 500 children in Ottawa and Northern Allegan County. It serves children, ages birth to five, and their families with Head Start and child care programs at 10 sites throughout Ottawa County.

Registrations are still being taken. To register, call 786-0736 or (800) 613-7013.





## State suspends license of Mt. Morris Twp. day care center

**MT. MORRIS TOWNSHIP**

**THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION**

Monday, August 28, 2006

**By Shena Abercrombie**

**sabercrombie@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6307**

MT. MORRIS TWP. - Neighbors and relatives were stunned Friday to learn a Mt. Morris Township day care center had been closed following a state investigation stemming from a complaint.

The state Department of Human Services on Thursday issued an order of summary suspension for Small Wonders Family Day Care, at 6412 Garden Drive. Owner Davonn M. Jones runs the center with her husband, Craig.

State officials would not elaborate on what led to the suspension, only saying that Jones violated the Child Care Organizations Act.

Davonn Jones described it as a code violation.

DHS issued the order of summary suspension along with a notice of intent to revoke Jones' license.

"This is so crazy. She and her husband are very nice people," said Quintisha Norton, 25, of Flint, a relative whose two children are cared for at the home at the corner of W. Klein and Garden Drive.

Jones said the investigation is unfair, and causing her financial hardship.

"Because of this investigation, I have a customer who has not paid me," she said. "I guess she thinks because my license is (suspended), that she doesn't have to pay me."

The colorful slide and playscape behind the ranch-style home stood empty Friday, and neighbors said the sign for the daycare was taken down abruptly.

"She's a good neighbor," said Shawn Malone, who owns another day care, Little Blessings, next door. "We respect each other and look out for each other. I knew something was wrong when they took the sign down. I just don't want people to get the two day care (facilities) confused."

DHS spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet said the next step will be an administrative hearing.

"The judge will make a decision about whether the revocation will stand," she said.

The order required Jones to inform all of the parents of children in her care that her license has been suspended and that she can no longer provide day care.

### QUICK TAKE

Day care homes

- Michigan law defines a group day care home as a private home in which more than six but not more than 12 minor children are given care and supervision for periods of less than 24 hours a day.

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Human Services



"I really don't know what I'm going to do," said Melissa Yancy of Flint, whose children, ages 2 and 11, have attended the day care home.

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August 26, 2006

## Teenager charged in hit-for-hire case

Police say Southgate girl sought to kill father and make his death look like it was an accident.

**Ronald J. Hansen and Norman Sinclair / The Detroit News**

**SOUTHGATE** -- Candice Marie Mays always talked tough, but never actually carried out her threats, her former high school principal remembered.

But the 17-year-old dropout once deemed "incorrigible" in juvenile court apparently was dead serious about ending the constant fighting with her father.

Mays offered an undercover officer a pair of diamond earrings as down payment for killing her father, Darrel Edward Mays, authorities said. The teenager, who is said by authorities to have acknowledged the plot, was charged Friday with soliciting murder, a felony that could send her to prison for the rest of her life.

She shook her head Friday afternoon as she returned to jail after her arraignment in 36th District Court in Detroit.

Her father, a housing contractor who only learned of the plot Thursday, seemed distraught.

"I just can't talk to anybody right now," he said from the front steps of his home, his eyes swollen from crying.

After telling a friend she wanted her father killed, on Aug. 18 Mays went to a former bar in Detroit called the Copa Lounge and unwittingly met with an agent from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the police report said. She gave the agent a pair of earrings and said the slaying had to appear accidental, the report said.

It is unclear how the authorities first learned Mays may have wanted to solicit a hit man.

Mays met the agent Wednesday outside the Copa again with an envelope containing her father's picture and license plate number, the report said.

During both meetings, which were recorded, the agent asked Mays if she wanted to go through with it. She was positive, the report said.

"It's unfathomable, and all of us want to know why," said Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy. "The motive appears to be that she was tired of arguing with her father every day, and she was tired of being stressed out by him. That's it."

Michael Kell, Mays' former principal at Southgate Anderson High School, said Mays used to threaten to beat up her classmates, but never actually got in a fight.

"Candice used to say shocking things but never carried them out," he said.

"She was not stupid but did not do well in class. She would come into the office with her dad, and we would talk about straightening things out.

"But she kept going down the wrong road," Kell said. "Since I've known her she has always been on the wrong side of the legal system."

According to court records, Southgate police charged Mays in May with misdemeanor assault. A juvenile court judge deemed her incorrigible in 2003, and she admitted receiving a stolen car in 2004, Worthy said. She also was charged with shoplifting, though the charge was dismissed.

"Quite frankly," Worthy said, "if every teenager that argued with their parents hired someone to kill that parent, I'm sure there wouldn't be any parents left in this world."

You can reach Ronald J. Hansen at (313) 222-2019 or [rhansen@detnews.com](mailto:rhansen@detnews.com).

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## Winds of change

Some still adrift in new hometown; stories of scars break your heart'

### GENESEE COUNTY

#### THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Sunday, August 27, 2006

By Kristin Longley

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GENESEE COUNTY - Every day, Marilyn Harris relives the horror of Hurricane Katrina.

Every time she closes her eyes, the New Orleans evacuee sees her home destroyed. Every night, she lies awake in a bed that's not her own, worrying about how her 26-year-old, mentally disabled son is adjusting to his new life with her in Flint.

She cries when she remembers what she left behind: the sights and sounds of a glorious city and the support system of friends and family.

Harris, 57, is now largely alone in a foreign city, with a world of responsibility on her shoulders.

"Sometimes I feel like a fish out of water," she said, the sound of the Big Easy in her voice.

And she's not the only one.

One year after Katrina struck the Gulf Coast on Aug. 29, 2005, some of the families uprooted are still adrift in Genesee County, struggling financially and - most of all - emotionally.

It's impossible to know how many evacuees ended up here. The state Department of Human Services has 124 individuals on record as attending the "one-stop shop" that local agencies pulled together to bring toiletries, food, housing and school arrangements to storm victims soon after the hurricane hit.

At least initially, the county reached out in big ways, setting up the warehouse of supplies and offering rental homes. There were heroic levels of generosity, in dollars, supplies and marathon treks by local people to the Gulf Coast to rebuild houses and clean up a disaster of epic proportions.

But how to mend the emotional and spiritual scars?

"The whole thing, it gets to you," Harris said through tears.

"If you were to look at me, you'd say, 'She made it, she's OK.' But sometimes it's within the mind that the battle rages on."

Harris and her son came to Flint through help from the American Red Cross. Agencies such as DHS and the Red Cross Genesee-Lapeer Chapter continue to work to assist local evacuees, although the initial burst of help from residents and volunteers has tapered off.



In fact, though, the county didn't see nearly as many evacuees as first expected.

"We could have helped many more. I was surprised that we didn't get more," said Gloria Bourdon, director of health, safety and nutrition services for the Genesee Intermediate School District. "But the overwhelming response is something to be affirmed and celebrated."

And perhaps learned from. Some local agencies are feeling burned by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The GISD, for one, had to pay more than \$6,600 after it sent a school bus to Louisiana to rescue a family. FEMA wouldn't reimburse the costs.

The Genesee County Land Bank Authority offered free rental housing to two families for six months. FEMA didn't pay up and left the land bank with a bill for more than \$24,000.

"It's been a nightmare across the country," said Dave Fadierko, the land bank's property manager. "We volunteered to do this good thing - and in some cases it turned out good - but we didn't get one penny in reimbursement."

Offering help to the evacuees is complicated by inconsistencies - local agencies don't have accurate numbers for how many people from the Gulf Coast fled here, and have no way to trace them now.

That means some evacuees fell through the cracks.

Then there are those such as Harris, for whom everything first seemed to fall into place.

Now, however, the onetime medical secretary barely squeaks by on food stamps and Social Security payments to her son, Byron. And the daily struggle goes beyond the financial.

She and her son flew here to live with her sister about two weeks after the storm. Her sister took in other relatives soon after, forcing Harris to look for housing elsewhere.

She found it in her north Flint home, rented from the Rev. Larry Holley, a local pastor who also is prominent in real estate.

In Louisiana, Harris kept busy, working 12-hour shifts at a local hospital before coming home to her daughter and three grandchildren - whom she hasn't seen since they evacuated to Texas and resettled in Nebraska. She relied on a network of friends and relatives to help her care for her son.

Now, she spends all day at home, caring for Byron, who needs almost constant attention. She doesn't have a car and asks her sister to drive her only when she needs groceries.

She wants to make friends and find a job - hopefully something in the medical field -but doesn't have the time or the means to pursue either.

There are more evacuees such as Harris in Genesee County. The Resource Center, a Flint agency that promotes volunteerism and helps nonprofit agencies, has tried to check up on some.

"There are some folks whose stories break your heart," said Lindsey Younger of the Resource Center. "They make you want to cry."

Stacy Brown came to Clio from Louisiana with husband Jed and stepdaughter Mary when friends offered to pay their way. Stacy Brown's state assistance stopped months ago.

"We're not the kind of people to put a strain on the state," she said. "We just didn't think that by trying to fend for ourselves that it would make that much of a difference."

She and her husband work at a Clio pizzeria for \$5.50 an hour. They've run through their savings and they barely make their rent.



Stacy Brown said they've looked for new jobs and want to stay in Clio - even though the winters are "too, too cold" and "you have to cut the grass twice as much here" - but a poor economic climate doesn't leave them with much choice.

"We're stuck," she said. "We need to do better, but who has the money to pick up and move back? And I'm not ready to start over."

Their future rests upon uncertainties. Stacy Brown says she's banking on a possible new job at the Vienna Township Wal-Mart, slated to open in September.

"I really wish there was someone here to relate to," she said. "Everyone here has friends, and mine are scattered across the country or gone."

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## Community help buoys some evacuees

**FLINT**

**THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION**

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**By Kristin Longley**

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FLINT - The Schief family is finally home.

Not back in New Orleans - where Hurricane Katrina destroyed years of mementos and hard work - but here in Flint.

The thought still sometimes surprises Viola Schief.

"It's definitely not what I'm used to," said the 29-year-old mother of eight. "But I love Flint."

So do Aaron and Brenda Clark, who lost their home of 28 years to Katrina.

"From the first day I came here in 1973, I loved it," said Aaron Clark, owner of New Orleans Seafood Inc., 2046 Corunna Road, with wife Brenda. "I thought that if I ever had to leave New Orleans, I would move to Flint."

The two families were welcomed to Genesee County with open arms after Katrina struck their hometown on Aug. 29, 2005.

The Schiefs were basically adopted by the Genesee Intermediate School District, which was contacted by a long-lost relative to provide a school bus to pick them up in Ferriday, La., a few weeks after Katrina. The family virtually filled the bus - besides Violet, there's husband Nikoma, 28, and their eight children, from 1-year-old Niseana to 13-year-old Niquel. Plus, seven other relatives came north with them.

"We feel like we've adopted them," said Jerry Johnson, GISD spokesman. "We take it personally. It's like welcoming a new person to your home for dinner.

"They're in our home and we want them to be at home."

Gloria Bourdon still gets emotional when she remembers the Schiefs' weary children piling out of the school bus that rescued them. Through tears, the GISD's director of health, safety and nutrition services attempted to explain the bond formed between the family and the school district.

"They came here not knowing a soul," Bourdon said. "It's a very startling realization, the tremendous loss and journey they went through."

Others took up the cause, too.



The family received new appliances and cupboards stocked with food from community groups and a state agency, and the GISD donated school supplies, clothing and furniture.

The Genesee County Land Bank Authority fixed up vacant houses and donated six months of rent to three evacuee families, including the Schiefs. Property Manager Dave Fadierko said the Schiefs are the "perfect tenants."

"They lost everything, and I would hate to be in that situation," Fadierko said. "But they're now in a really good situation. That's how we meant it to turn out."

Violet Schief said her children, who attend Flint schools, have made themselves at home and are thriving. She said she couldn't have done it without community support.

"They did a wonderful job," Schief said. "I don't want to leave."

If not for the GISD, Viola Schief said her family would have been lost in the Katrina melee. As it is, the family squeaks by on food stamps and Viola Schief's paycheck - furnished by the GISD. Nikoma Schief still hasn't found work.

The GISD gave her a job as a family advocate, facilitating resources and activities to link parents with their children.

Who better for the job than a mother of eight?

"This job is amazing, I obviously love kids," she said. "If it weren't for the GISD and this job, I would be going back or be gone already."

The Clarks' story may be just as inspiring. In a crippling job market, they have opened their own local business and are bullish about the future.

"Business gets a little better every day," said Aaron Clark, who plans to stay in Flint until he retires "someplace with a milder winter."

The couple fled New Orleans to live with relatives in Grand Blanc Township just before Katrina hit.

They were already planning to open a seafood store in Flint, but the hurricane forced them into action five months early. With help from family and friends, Clark began working last fall to convert a former beauty salon into the seafood market.

The couple owns the store with his sister and her son.

Now, the pans of boiled shrimp and crawfish are a vivid reminder of home. And the Clarks seem to be doing just fine.

"This is a beautiful town," said Aaron Clark. "I've never met people with such good hearts in my entire lifetime."

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# Lawmakers face deadline to fix minimum wage law

8/27/2006, 8:22 a.m. ET

By DAVID EGGERT

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Lawmakers face a Republican-imposed deadline this week to fix a consequence of the state's minimum wage increase that will make more workers eligible for overtime pay.

The state Senate on Wednesday plans to take another stab at gaining immediate effect for a bill that would keep salespeople, truckers and others ineligible for time-and-a-half pay when the minimum wage jumps from \$5.15 to \$6.95 an hour in October.

Michigan law now says more workers can qualify for overtime when the state's wage is higher than the federal rate of \$5.15 an hour.

Republicans and business groups warn workers may be laid off or have their hours cut if the unintended consequence is not fixed with legislation. But Democrats have refused to let the bill take immediate effect, seeing a rare opportunity to barter and get some of their initiatives passed in the GOP-controlled Legislature.

As a result, the sides have been negotiating ahead of Wednesday's vote scheduled by Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming. Sikkema has suggested he could support raising the Merit Award college scholarship to \$4,000 or giving a tax credit to low-income workers if Democrats help fix the overtime issue.

Senate Minority Leader Bob Emerson, D-Flint, also has introduced a bill aimed at addressing the overtime issue, but it would eliminate the lower minimum wage for certain workers who earn tips.

Senate Republicans and businesses — particularly restaurants — oppose Emerson's bill, and House Speaker Craig DeRoche is not in favor of a deal involving the Merit Award. Sikkema spokesman Ari Adler said Friday the earned-income tax credit was the most likely option.

"The Democrats are looking to get something for a vote they should be doing because it's the right thing," Adler said. "They're finding reluctance on our part to pay too much for their vote."



But Liz Boyd, spokeswoman for Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm, said she is willing to help legislators solve a problem they created.

"The Legislature created this problem months and months ago," Boyd said. "We are now at the end of August with nothing on the governor's desk."

It is harder to win immediate effect for legislation in the Senate than in the House because of procedural rules.

It is unclear what the Senate will do if immediate effect cannot be gained Wednesday. It can keep trying or eventually decide to send the bill to Granholm without immediate effect.

If Granholm signed it, workers would get the overtime for about seven months until the bill took effect in late March 2007. Or she could veto the bill, meaning workers would earn overtime pay indefinitely.

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## **Cana Garrison: Early-out plan will create jobs**

A July 20 LSJ editorial stated that early outs for state employees are not needed because "younger employees - they are less experienced and usually less productive."

Early outs are needed, not just to save tax dollars, but to create jobs.

The governor went to Japan twice for only a couple of hundred jobs. An early out would create 5,000 to 6,000 jobs.

We must work hard to change Michigan's business climate to attract new jobs. We are the No. 1 state for moving vans full of people looking for jobs. I don't want to wake up someday to find that our largest export is our children and grandchildren.

State Rep. Rick Jones has pledged to fight for every possible job and a three-year early out plan will create jobs today.

Many state employees with years of service have contacted me and have stated that they are burned out on their job. They are on the more expensive retirement system and at the top of the pay scale and new employees would receive a less expensive 401(k) program, like I have, and start at the beginning level of wages.

It is important to remember that fresh Michigan graduates bring with them enthusiasm, computer skills and fresh ideas.

I place great value on older experienced employees. A recent example in the LSJ was the story of a 91-year-old Grand Ledge man who works every day. The difference is that he chooses to work and be productive.

By letting employees who no longer wish to work leave early, we will create many new jobs. They have served the state faithfully and deserve to retire if that is their wish.

Let's keep more of our state's graduates in Michigan by creating those jobs now.

Cana Garrison is chief of staff for state Rep.  
Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge.